Washburn-Crosby Milling Complex,
Humboldt Mill
710-714 South Second Street
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-69-H

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
20-H-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WASHBURN-CROSBY MILLING COMPLEX, HUMBOLDT MILL

HABS No. MN-~~69H~~ 69-H

Location: 710-714 South Second Street, Lot 28, north side of Second Street between Portland Ave. and Eighth Ave., Minneapolis, Hennepin Co., Minnesota.

USGS Minneapolis South Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15; 479740:4980480; 479860:4980420; 479820:4980360; 479700:4980400

Present Owner: Riverside Industries, Inc.
P.O. Box 1125
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55440

Present Occupant: None.

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: In the late nineteenth century, Minneapolis was the milling center of the western world. The Humboldt Mill was an integral part of that industry. The first mill to be rebuilt after the great mill explosion in 1878, the Humboldt was operating within 115 days from the time the first stone was laid. The new mill, built for Messrs. Bull and Newton, was billed, at the time, as a model of architectural skill and of the most advanced system of New Process milling. The Humboldt was purchased by the Washburn-Crosby Mill in 1899, renamed the "E" Mill and thus became a part of one of the largest milling complexes in the Twin Cities.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION See HABS No. MN-69 for general information.

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1878.

2. Architect: John T. Noyes and Sons, Buffalo, N.Y..

3. Original and subsequent owner: The mill was built for Messrs. Bull and Newton in 1878. Hinkle, Greenleaf & Co. took it over in 1880 when Bull and Newton went bankrupt. Washburn-Crosby began leasing the mill in 1896, and three years later, in 1899, purchased the Humboldt. Renamed the "E" Mill, the building remained the property of Washburn-Crosby, later General Mills, until 1965 when it was purchased by Riverside Industries, the present owner.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The building of the mill was under the superintendence of J.S. Karns who represented J.T. Noyes & Sons. The millwright work was directed by Mr. G.W. McClure. The machinery was furnished by various companies, including: Silwell & Bierce Manufacturing Co., Oayton, Ohio (Victor turbine); John T. Noyes & Sons (mills, purifiers, rolls); Barnard & Leas Manufacturing Co., Moline, Ill. (flour packers); William Richmond, Lockport, N.Y. (cleaning machinery); and Kurth Cockle Separator Co., Milwaukee, Wis. (cockle separators).

5. Original plans and construction: The original plans have not been located.

6. Alterations and additions: The building has undergone very few alterations. In 1913, the original monitor was altered to add a half story to each side. (Permit #A 12068). There was no architect and the work was done by day laborers. A structural steel conveyor gallery was added in 1918 by architect and builder, John Wunder Co.

   The original windows have been replaced and the arched portion bricked up. The original brick is still in place, but has been painted.

B. Historical Context:

The Humboldt Mill was originally built in 1873 by Messrs. Bull & Newton of Minneapolis. Mr. John Webster was the contracting millwright and John T. Noyes & Sons of Buffalo, N.Y., was the architect.

On May 2, 1878, the mill was totally destroyed in the great mill explosion of the Washburn crosby "A" Mill. Bull and Newton began plans for the new mill almost immediately. On June 17, 1878, the contract was awarded to Noyes & Sons. In Oecember 1878, the Humboldt Mill was the first of the rebuilt mills to begin operation. The new mill was billed as a model of the most advanced system of New Process milling with a capacity of 700 bushels.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Minneapolis was the center of milling activity in the western world. The Humboldt Mill was one of the largest mills in the city. It continued operation until 1965 after being incorporated into the Washburn-Crosby Milling Complex (later General Mills) in 1899.

Operation ceased in 1965 due to increased shipping costs and the building has been used for storage since that time.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Humboldt Mill is a four-story brick building with an additional story over the center three bays. There is also a full basement. An addition to the roof was made in 1913 to make the building a full five stories tall. The facade facing South Second Street is decorated with brickwork and cornices making this rectangular building quite a handsome industrial building.

2. Condition of fabric: The exterior of the building appears to be in good condition. Information on the interior is unknown.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is ninety feet long by sixty-six feet wide (South Second Street elevation), eighty feet high and is divided into five bays with an additional floor over the center three bays in the original design. A later addition added the outside bays to the top floor.

2. Foundations: The foundations are of gray limestone, four and a half feet thick at the base and three and a half feet thick at the top.

3. Walls: The walls are of Milwaukee cream-colored brick, progressing from 24 to 12 inches thick from bottom to top.

4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing brick walls.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are two doors on the first floor, opening to the outside on the south. There is a doorway on the north side on every floor, opening into the Wheat House.

b. Windows and shutters: The South Second Street elevation was punctuated by twenty-three window openings divided equally into five vertical bays of four windows and three in the monitor over the center three bays. Each two-over-two light sash window was capped by round arches worked in brick. The addition of the two outer bays to the top floor in 1913 follows the same pattern.

6. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The roof is flat over the outer two bays and pitched slightly, peaking over the center bay. The roof was originally tin clad but sometime between 1890 and 1892 was clad in iron.

b. Cornice, eaves: A cornice with dentils tops both the fourth and fifth stories (original design and 1913 addition).

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Sometime between 1913 and 1949 a 7 foot high gallery was added to the roof of the building. It is stuccoed on wire lath and is approximately ten feet wide by eighty feet long.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: One brief description determined that the floor plan is a simple rectangle with a staircase in the southeast corner.

2. Machinery: The machinery listed as present in the building when it was rebuilt in 1879 included two 500 Fairbanks scales in the basement with storage bins resting on an independent foundation and extending up through the mill with a capacity of 25,000 bushels. There were fourteen runs of mill stones on the grinding floor along with three Eureka Flour Packers. On the third, fourth and fifth floors were located eighteen purifiers, eighteen sets of full chilled rolls along with bolting chests, aspirators and elevators. There were also a double set of cleaning machinery and two cockle separators. On the sixth floor there were separators, storage bins and dust rooms for purifiers.

3. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: In 1880, steam was used for heating. The boiler was located in the basement.

b. Mechanical power: Power for the machinery was provided by a thirty-inch Victor turbine located 152 feet northeast of the mill.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Principle elevation faces South Second Street in Minneapolis facing southwest.

2. Outbuildings: Because the Humboldt Mill is itself part of a large complex, there are many related buildings.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings: None

B. Early Views: (from the Minnesota Historical Society)

View from the south (close-up), 1893

View from the southwest, 1893

Etching of the great mill explosion, 1878

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Department of Inspections, City of Minneapolis

Minneapolis City Directories

2. Secondary and published sources:

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Edgar, William, Metal of Gold, Minneapolis: 1925.

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Sanborn, Foote, and Rascher Insurance Maps

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University of Minnesota
March 21, 1986

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5142, Historic Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Carol Prafcke, University of Minnesota, March 1986.